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CIA Opened Mail Of Humphrey, Nixon, Kennedy

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The Central Intelligence Agency illegally opened the mail of "selected American politicians," including Richard Nixon, Edward Kennedy and Hubert Humphrey, as part of its 20-year mail intercept program, it was disclosed yesterday.

The chairman of the Senate intelligence committee, Frank Church (D-Idaho), said investigators even found a letter he wrote to his mother-in-law in the CIA's files.

Church made the disclosures at a fast-moving committee hearing that began with testimony from retired CIA counterintelligence chief James Angleton and ended with a renewed move to call Nixon as a witness.

The 11-member committee agreed later at a closed-door meeting that the ex-President's testimony was "needed" on a wide range of issues raised by Senate investigation of government intelligence agencies. The committee's chief counsel, Fritz Schwarz, was told to begin negotiations with Nixon's attorneys in hopes of securing his appearance without a subpoena.

Church said the committee agreed that

Nixon would be "the best witness" on a number of points, including the background of the so-called Huston plan that urged presidential approval of a wide range of illicit domestic activities, including mail intercepts.

Decrying the CIA's "lack of accountability," Church emphasized again yesterday that its program of intercepting all mail to and from the Soviet Union began around 1952, long before White House approval was sought, and ended only in 1973, almost three years after the Huston plan was presumed dead.

Working from a "Watch List," which reportedly contained as many as 1,300 names, CIA officers in New York photographed many of the letters, put the originals back into the mail stream, and had the copies sent to CIA headquarters here.

Church said the CIA evidently strayed from the "Watch List" repeatedly and opened the mail of many prominent American citizens and institutions that had not even been targeted for surveillance.

In addition to his own and Nixon's mail, Church said, this included correspondence to or from the late civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. and his wife; Jay Rockefeller; Sens. Humphrey and Edward

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